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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000491

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA: RUSSIA OFFERS LITTLE AT AFGHANISTAN FORUM

Classified By: Charge John Heffern for reaons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) held an October 21 discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan that saw the U.S. and Allies ask Russia to provide additional assistance to Afghanistan, while Moscow offered nothing concrete and reiterated its call for the Alliance to work with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on counter-narcotics. D/SRAP Jones thanked Russia for support in the form of transit agreements and suggested that Moscow resume lethal equipment donations to Kabul, as requested by the Afghan Minister of Interior, and help repair Afghan infrastructure. Allies also asked Russia to expand the limited NATO-Russia transit arrangement to match the agreements Russia has with the U.S., provide helicopters to Afghanistan, and help diplomatically with Afghanistan's neighbors, including Iran. End summary.

Russia Calls for Standing NRC Dialogue on Afghanistan

12. (C) The October 21 NRC discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan brought to NATO experts from 10 of the 28 Allied capitals, including Deputy to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (D/SRAP) Paul Jones for the U.S., and two from Moscow, MFA Second Asia Department Deputy Director Ali Mustafabeli and CSTO Secretariat Representative Mikhail Melikhov. Russian Representative to NATO Ambassador Dmitri Rogozin kicked off the Russian presentation by reiterating that he hoped the meeting was the beginning of a permanent NRC discussion on Afghanistan, then passed around photographs from Afghanistan showing a heavy Russian helicopter lifting a Chinook that had engine trouble as a demonstration of potential NATO-Russia cooperation. He asked that General McChrystal brief the NRC, reiterated his proposal to arrange meetings between Russian and ISAF veterans of Afghanistan, and mentioned Russia's hope to overcome existing legal barriers to selling helicopters to NATO.

13. (C) Mustafabeli cited past Russian support to Afghanistan and remarked that Russia stood "ready" to provide further assistance, including through the NRC, but offered no specifics. He cited the impact of Afghan narcotics upon Russia, mentioning that many Russians believed that Afghan drug trafficking was purposely aimed at their country, making it imperative that NATO address this issue. Mustafabeli

lamented NATO's decision not to work with the CSTO on counter-narcotics, saying that we should "pool our resources." He said Russia supported OSCE projects in the region, but reiterated Moscow's concern over security for projects in Afghanistan itself.

¶4. (C) Mustafabeli stressed the need to recognize the Afghans who demonstrated support for their government by participating in the recent election. He thought the Pakistani leadership understood the need to fight extremists and cautioned that it would be a "great mistake" to introduce foreign troops there. Russia was actively discussing the situation with Islamabad, including at the last Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference held in Russia that brought together the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mustafabeli said that Iran, as an important regional power, must also factor into South Asian stability.

¶5. (C) The CSTO's Melikhov gave an overview of the organization's counter-narcotics effort, Operation Canal, and urged NATO, the EU, and OSCE to work with the CSTO to address the threat from Afghan narcotics.

#### U.S. Calls for Russian Aid To Kabul

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¶6. (C) D/SRAP Jones thanked Russia for its support to Afghanistan, citing previous Russian military donations totaling 90 million USD from 2003-2005, food aid, and the recent lethal and non-lethal transit agreements. He called

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for additional Russian in-kind donations, including helicopters and refurbishment of Soviet-built hydroelectric power plants in the north. Jones also made a call to NRC members to consider importing agricultural products to help initiate and increase Afghan agricultural exports. Jones highlighted the success of the NRC counter-narcotics training program for Afghan and Central Asian narcotics and law enforcement officials, and an upcoming December bilateral meeting hosted by Rosfinmonitoring in Moscow that would focus on controlling illicit finances that stemmed from the Afghan narcotics trade. On Pakistan, Jones briefed on the current U.S. focus to address the nation's energy crisis, and assisting internal refugees. He encouraged other countries to offer assistance along these lines, as well as for the reconstruction phase ahead, in order to achieve long-term stability in the Swat Valley and surrounding areas.

#### UK May Send More Troops

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¶7. (C) The UK's FCO Director for South Asia and Afghanistan Karen Pierce stressed the need for the new Afghan government to appoint the right people at the provincial and district level in order to address the poor delivery of basic services. She called for a more focused dialogue between Kabul and the regions that would help strike the correct balance of power and make Afghanistan a functioning state. Pierce reminded the NRC that PM Brown said that the UK was ready to send more troops to Afghanistan if it had a credible government. She thought the NRC could make concrete contributions by extending the scope of the NATO-Russia transit arrangement, improve the NRC counter-narcotics project, have Russia deliver military equipment to Kabul, and assist with re-engineering the Afghans' Soviet-era helicopters.

#### Allies Want Russia to do More

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¶8. (C) Allies commented generally on the situation in Afghanistan, while focusing on additional Russian assistance:

-- Czech PermRep Povejsil thought Russia could use its experience to reconstruct Afghan dams and irrigation

projects, and called upon Russia to provide support for Afghan National Security forces. He used the example of the Czech donation of 12 helicopters to the Afghan National Army and sending a training team for pilots to Kabul as the type of activity Russia could undertake. He asked that Russia consider implementing projects with tangible deliverables to help inject "new life" into the NRC.

-- Norway agreed with Russia on the necessity to bring in all regional actors, and thought that Russian diplomacy could be a means to "deliver" Iran as a more positive force. He thought the NRC should focus on practical cooperation to stabilize Afghanistan, including an expanded transit arrangement and Russian assistance to Afghan security forces, before turning to a larger political dialogue.

-- Chief of the Romanian MFA's Afghanistan-Pakistan Unit, Sever Cout, called for expanding the NATO-Russia transit arrangement to match the bilateral U.S.-Russia lethal transit agreement.

-- Italian PermRep Stefanini commented that Russian interest in holding this discussion confirmed its willingness to cooperate with NATO on Afghanistan. Italian Deputy Special Envoy for Afghanistan Mercuri cited the SCO special conference on Afghanistan, held in Moscow in March, as an example of expanded regional cooperation on this issue.

-- Turkish PermRep Berk cited Ankara's initiation of tri-lateral summits that included leaders from Kabul and Islamabad, and explained that the next meeting would include other Afghan neighbors.

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-- Jerzy Wieclaw, head of the Polish MFA's Afghanistan Task Force and former Ambassador in Kabul, said the Polish experience in Ghazni province demonstrated the complexity of Afghan society and the need for capable local governments. He thought ISAF and Afghan forces must provide adequate security to allow local officials to "show up and stay in their offices." On Pakistan, Wieclaw stressed the need to provide secular education, and warned against ignoring the growth of extremism in the southern Punjab province while attention was directed on Pakistan's north.

#### NRC Counter-Narcotics Program

¶9. (C) Germany and Norway announced their contributions to the NRC counter-narcotics training program budget for 2010, committing 100,000 Euros and 100,000 USD respectively. The U.S. was recognized for having already committed 100,000 USD.

#### Comment

¶10. (C) Allies were disappointed in the relatively low level of Russian participation in the NRC meeting, as well as Moscow's failure to bring anything new to the table regarding assistance to Afghanistan. This situation does not bode well for Russia's call for NATO and Russia to have a regular political discussion on Afghanistan, or for Moscow's insistence that the NRC include an Afghanistan working group.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by D/SRAP Jones.  
HEFFERN